

**Written Testimony on Behalf of the Connecticut State Library H.B. No. 5037
(COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING JUNE 30, 2023**

February 17, 2022

Honorable Appropriations Committee members:

I am writing in support of Governor Lamont's budget for the Connecticut State Library. I was pleased to see that there were no cuts made in the upcoming budget as has been done repeatedly in the past. Past cuts have resulted in losses of staffing, programs, and services to the State Library which they provide to libraries across the entirety of Connecticut and therefore have been felt immensely by many.

Over the past two years and as we continue to move forward, Connecticut's public libraries have risen to and continue to rise to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic and have proved over and over again how important we are to citizens across the state. Pivoting our services of programs and resources to online platforms, assisting our patrons and neighbors in getting vaccine appointments and ensuring our patrons have access to all of the latest changes to Connecticut regulations illustrates the ongoing care libraries take to maintain the health and safety of the communities we live and work within.

The pandemic also demonstrated the importance of our statewide library services. As a Children's Librarian conducting safe, socially distant programs for our youngest CT residents, it is due to the state library's borrowItCT system and deliverIt system that I am able to provide individual access to the stories we share at storytimes, in book groups and in our STEAM programs all while maintaining the health and safety of our patrons and staff. The ability to borrow collections from the state has allowed us to expand services in ways we would not have been able to otherwise, introducing our patrons to a larger, more diverse collection of materials they can access in person, at home or through curbside pickup.

Seeing children and families returning and being able to enjoy all that our library has to offer once again in-person after our shutdown in 2020 and hearing how grateful they were that even through the time when our doors were not physically open, they had access to books, programs and resources was immensely heartwarming. Yet, that reopening was just the first of many hurdles we have had to endure through this pandemic and as we continue to navigate new protocols it is with the support of the Connecticut State Library and Connecticut Library Consortium that I can say our library and the Connecticut Library Association continue to move forward and provide services to our residents - of all ages.

Thank you to the committee for maintaining State Library funding for this year. Libraries truly do make a difference in the lives of so many in your towns, the state and nationally. Visit your local library and I guarantee you will not doubt the importance libraries have in their communities. I am hopeful for your continued support. Help us, help you.

Sincerely,

Alessandra Petrino
Head of Children and Young Adult Services, Weston Public Library
Connecticut Library Association Board Member